

Palliative Care Drug Program (PCDP) Frequently Asked Questions

1. *Should all palliative care patients be enrolled in this program?*

No. This program is intended for individuals who are at the end stage of a terminal illness (an anticipated prognosis of less than six months), who choose to receive palliative care at home for as long as possible and who do not have adequate drug coverage through other sources.

Many medications for end-of-life care are covered by other Pharmacare Programs and private insurance. Some patients may already have their drug coverage needs met at very limited or no cost in their existing drug coverage program (such as the Seniors' Pharmacare Program, Department of Community Services Pharmacare Program). The Palliative Care Drug Program (PCDP) works particularly well for patients who have no other insurance, inadequate insurance, or who may have significant out of pocket costs associated with the therapies that they will likely need in receiving palliative care at home. Discussions with clients and an understanding of their current access to drug coverage can help guide palliative care teams to determine if a client would benefit from enrolment in the PCDP. The list of drugs covered by the PCDP can be found at the following link: <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare/palliative-drug-program.asp>

Please note, those with Family Pharmacare (all Nova Scotia residents are eligible) can have their deductible and copay limits reassessed if their income level has changed. To do so they may contact Pharmacare at 1-800-305-5026, select option **2** (Family Pharmacare), then select option **1** (Registration).

A quick comparison of the available NS Pharmacare Programs can be found at the following link: <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare/documents/PharmacareProgramComparison.pdf>

Full descriptions and enrolment forms for other Pharmacare Programs can be found at the following link: <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare/>

2. *What drugs are covered by the PCDP? Does it only pay for the portion that a patient's other insurance plan does not pay (copayments, etc.)?*

The program allows for 100% coverage for the drugs that are included in Canadian Palliative Care Gold Standard document. A full list of the drugs covered is provided in the PCDP formulary available at <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare/documents/PalliativeCareDrugProgramFormulary.pdf>.

- For those with another insurance provider other than Pharmacare (e.g. private insurance, NIHB, Veterans' Affairs), the PCDP shall be payer of last resort.
- If the patient does not have an alternative source of insurance or their only other insurance is a provincial Pharmacare Program, the palliative care program pays the full cost of the benefits listed once the patient is enrolled.

3. *How long does it take for an authorization to be processed?*

When the Pharmacare office receives the authorization form, it can take 2-3 business days for the application to be processed. It should be noted that the coverage begins from the date on the authorization form so this processing time does not affect the date the coverage takes effect. If there is an urgent unmet need, the patient or team member may wish to consider advising the pharmacy of the pending coverage.

4. *Should patients continue their enrolment in other Pharmacare programs or private insurance plans after they have been enrolled in the PCDP?*

Yes. The PCDP covers a specific list of medications that are used in end-of-life care but other Pharmacare Programs and private insurance include a much larger array of insured drugs and products which may also be of benefit to the client. Private insurance may also provide non-medication related benefits (private hospital rooms, home care equipment, physiotherapy etc.).

5. *Is the authorization form sent to the pharmacy?*

There is no requirement to provide authorization forms to the pharmacy. Completed forms are faxed to the Pharmacare Office for processing and when processed, pharmacies are able to electronically bill the Pharmacare Program. Patients/families who are having prescriptions filled should notify the pharmacy that they are enrolled to ensure that coverage is applied each time. Some teams have however indicated they prefer to notify the pharmacy themselves by phone. The team, in consultation with their community pharmacies and their patient, may arrange a notification system that will work best for them.

6. *My palliative care client has advised me that they shouldn't have to pay for a medication which is a benefit in the PCDP; however, there is a copay or no payment. What should I do?*

There are a variety of reasons that this may occur. Consider these steps:

- Confirm that the drug is a benefit in the PCDP:
<http://novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare/documents/PalliativeCareDrugProgramFormulary.pdf>
- Confirm that the patient's enrolment in the program is current.
- You can review the claim in question to determine if there is a billing error.
- Medavie Blue Cross, the administrator of the PCDP, is also available to address questions you may have about enrolment, benefit drugs, and claims issues.
- Medavie Blue Cross can be contacted by calling 1-800-305-5026, select option **3** (prescription inquiries), then select option **2** (Pharmacy).